

Duenas sentenced to 25 years to life for killing his wife

Redding Record Searchlight (CA) - December 6, 2013

Section: News

A tearful Mark Gilbert Duenas of Cottonwood was sentenced Friday to 25 years to life in prison for the first-degree murder of his wife last year.

The 53-year-old Duenas, wearing jail attire and handcuffs, swore under oath that he's innocent and did not kill his wife of nearly 33 years and mother of his five sons, Karen.

"You have got to believe me, I would never hurt her," he said. "We loved each other so much."

Speaking in halted tones as he cried, Duenas recalled the first time he saw his wife at a church dance when he was only 15, their first date and their first kiss.

Family members openly wept as he recounted those tender moments and others, including the pride she had in her children.

"I miss her every day," he said. "I hurt for her. I hurt for my boys."

Duenas was convicted on Nov. 1 of murdering his wife, a conviction family members say is unjust.

Joseph Tenney, a brother of Karen Duenas, addressed the court and criticized the murder investigation and subsequent prosecution and conviction of his brother-in-law.

"To me, the evidence was lacking," he said, adding that he remains not convinced that Duenas killed his sister.

Tyler Duenas, one of the couple's five sons, was even harsher in his criticism, accusing law enforcement and the prosecution of manipulating evidence to obtain a conviction against an innocent man.

"This system failed us miserably," he said, adding that sheriff's investigation and prosecution of his father were replete with mistakes.

"They have no regard for what's right or wrong" and twisted his father's words against him, he said.

"This is not justice," he said. "This is a travesty."

Although Shasta County Senior Deputy District Attorney Stephanie Bridgett sympathized with family members for the emotional pain and turmoil they are going through, she said law enforcement and the prosecution acted appropriately and that Duenas is manipulating the family to believe otherwise.

"He murdered her," she said, saying the evidence against him was overwhelming. "He deserves to spend the rest of his life in prison."

Superior Court Judge Bradley Boeckman agreed.

"This was a brutal killing," he said, adding that the conduct "calls out" for severe punishment.

Although Duenas was not eligible for good behavior credits since he's being in jail, he was credited with 428 days to his prison sentence for the time he's served.

Defense attorney Ron Powell said he would file an appeal of his client's conviction that day.

Among grounds for appeal, he said, were hearsay and contradictory statements during the trial.

In addition, he said, the fact that Duenas was convicted during his retrial after a prior jury voted 9-3 in support of his acquittal this past summer is sure to catch the attention of appellate judges.

Bridgett argued during the retrial that Duenas stabbed his wife because he was unhappy with his marriage and had carried on a long-distance telephone and text-message relationship with an old flame.

Duenas, who has been in custody since his October 2012 arrest, was arrested five months after Karen Duenas was found stabbed on the morning of May 5, 2012, in her Robinson Glen Drive bedroom in Cottonwood.

She suffered two stab wounds to her back and a fatal wound to her chest that severed her aorta and windpipe and struck bone.

It was the defense contention that Karen Duenas was murdered by an intruder or intruders.

• Caption: Mark Gilbert Duenas, convicted in November of murdering his wife in 2012, was sentenced today to 25 years to life in Shasta County Superior Court. Mark Gilbert Duenas, convicted in November of murdering his wife in 2012, was sentenced today to 25 years to life in Shasta County Superior Court. Mark Gilbert Duenas, convicted in November of murdering his wife in 2012, was sentenced today to 25 years to life in Shasta County Superior Court. Mark Gilbert Duenas, convicted in November of murdering his wife in 2012, was sentenced today to 25 years to life in Shasta County Superior Court. Mark Gilbert Duenas, convicted in November of murdering his wife in 2012, was sentenced today to 25 years to life in Shasta County Superior Court. Mark Gilbert Duenas, convicted in November of murdering his wife in 2012, was sentenced today to 25 years to life in Shasta County Superior Court. Mark Gilbert Duenas, convicted in November of murdering his wife in 2012, was sentenced today to 25 years to life in Shasta County Superior Court. Karen Kay Duenas

• Record: d7991dbf2f7069acd8de9e1172468387aebafd49

• Copyright: Copyright (c) 2013, Redding Record Searchlight (CA)